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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR MEETS AL-SABAH GOVERNOR: FRANK TALK ON  
SUCCESSION, IRAQ

REF: KUWAIT 3580

Classified By: Ambassador Richard LeBaron for reason 1.4 (d)

1. (C) Summary: During an October 23 meeting, Mubarak al-Kabir Governor Shaykh Mubarak al-Humoud al-Sabah shared with Ambassador his view that a possible Amiri leadership succession in Kuwait would not include Prime Minister Shaykh Sabah al-Ahmed. In addition, the Governor relayed concerns that events in Iraq could still negatively impact the security of Kuwait. End Summary.

2. (C/NOFORN) Mubarak al-Kabir Governor Shaykh Mubarak al-Humoud al-Sabah told the Ambassador on October 23 that should current Amir Shaykh Jabir al-Ahmed al-Sabah pass away, National Guard Commander Salim al-Ali al-Salim al-Sabah would most likely be appointed Amir by the ruling al-Sabah family. Such an appointment would come to Shaykh Salim, should he desire it, out of deference to his seniority in the family. The Governor added that in this scenario, current Prime Minister Shaykh Sabah al-Ahmed al-Sabah would be appointed Crown Prince but would probably retain the role of Prime Minister, thus maintaining day-to-day control of the State of Kuwait.

3. (C/NOFORN) Responding to a question from the Ambassador, the Governor said the Amir was not likely to name a new Crown Prince before the death of Shaykh Sa'ad, owing to his deep respect for the ailing Crown Prince, who had been "very honest and loyal" to the Amir. As there was no crisis in the country, he added, there was no urgent need for change, especially as PM Shaykh Sabah al-Ahmed al-Sabah was "already ruling the country."

#### Concern About Spillover of Southern Iraq Instability

4. (C) On Iraq, the Governor expressed concern that the continued instability of southern Iraq would begin to negatively impact Kuwait. Although Kuwait has commercial interests in Iraq, he said, the possibility of Iraqis crossing the border into Kuwait in large numbers was a GOK concern. (Note: It was unclear if the Governor was referring to refugees or jihadis. End Note.) Despite this sentiment, the Governor expressed his belief that Iraq would settle down within a few months after the scheduled January 2005 elections.

#### Comment

5. (C/NOFORN) Although he is a moderately influential member of the al-Sabah family and enjoys some access to internal family deliberations, we find Shaykh Mubarak's assertion that Shaykh Salim al-Ali is next in line for accession to the throne unlikely. While a respected, senior member of the al-Sabah family, Shaykh Salim is eighty and does not display near the enthusiasm or political acumen of the Prime Minister. Nonetheless, even if appointed, he would present little competition to Shaykh Sabah in running the government, and could be a symbol of stability and orderly transition.

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LeBaron